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	EUR-00	VC-00	H-01	TEDE-00	INR-00	IO-00	L-00
	AC-01	NSAE-00	NSCE-00	OIC-02	OMB-01	PA-00	PM-00
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FM AMEMBASSY HARARE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0728
INFO SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY PRIORITY
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY
HQ USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE//ECJ4-HA//

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 HARARE 000161

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/15/2007
TAGS: PGOV PREL PHUM EAID ZI
SUBJECT: VISIT TO MUTARE AND MANICALAND

CLASSIFIED BY JOSEPH G. SULLIVAN FOR REASONS 1.5B/D

11. C) SUMMARY: A BRIEF JANUARY 10-11 VISIT TO MUTARE IN MANICALAND PROVINCE CONFIRMED THE CONVENTIONAL WISDOM THAT ZANU/PF IS FACING DIFFICULTIES IN THE CITY OF MUTARE AND SURROUNDING AREAS AND IS VULNERABLE IN ALL BUT THE MOST RURAL AREAS. THE AMBASSADOR MET WITH ACTING PROVINCIAL ADMINISTRATOR MBETSA IN THE ABSENCE OF THE GOVERNOR, MAYOR LAWRENCE MUDEHWE, A GROUP OF COMMERCIAL FARMERS AND BISHOPS FROM THE CATHOLIC, ANGLICAN, EVANGELICAL AND PRESBYTERIAN CHURCHES. HE ALSO VISITED A USAID FUNDED VOLUNTARY COUNSELING AND TESTING CENTER AND A PRIMARY SCHOOL RECONSTRUCTED FROM DEVASTATING HURRICANE ELAINE WITH DOD HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE FUNDS. THE COUNTRY'S ECONOMIC DECLINE, PROVOKED BY BAD ECONOMIC POLICIES AND LAND INSTABILITY, WAS MUCH IN EVIDENCE. POLITICAL VIOLENCE, ORGANIZED BY THE GOVERNMENT, WAS A MAJOR CONCERN OF CHURCH LEADERS. BUT MOST INTERLOCUTORS THOUGHT THAT ECONOMIC HARD TIMES AND ZANU-PF INATTENTION TO MANICALAND MADE PRESIDENT MUGABE'S ELECTION PROSPECTS IN THE PROVINCE POOR, A PERCEPTION WHICH THE OPPOSITION MDC SHARES. END SUMMARY

ECONOMY AND AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION DOWN

12. (C) MUTARE AND MANICALAND PROVINCE ARE FEELING THE IMPACT OF ZIMBABWE'S ECONOMIC DOWNTURN, WITH TIMBERLAND, AGRO-INDUSTRY AND COMMERCIAL FARMING NEGATIVELY AFFECTED BY LAND INSTABILITY AND OCCUPATIONS. CLOSE PROXIMITY TO THE MOZAMBIQUE BORDER HAS ALSO SPAWNED A FLOURISHING CLANDESTINE TRADE OF PRICE-CONTROLLED ITEMS FROM ZIMBABWE TO MOZAMBIQUE WHERE TRADERS ARE ABLE TO REALIZE A HANDSOME PROFIT. CONSUMERS IN ZIMBABWE FEEL THE EFFECT IN SHORTAGES OF THESE BASIC COMMODITIES. CHURCH LEADERS SAID THEIR POOREST CONSTITUENTS ARE FACING REAL HUNGER BUT THAT GOVERNMENT DELAYS IN RECOGNIZING SHORTAGES MEANT THAT THE CHURCHES DID NOT APPEAL TO SUPPORTING INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS IN A TIMELY

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FASHION. PROVINCIAL AUTHORITIES CLAIMED THAT THE IMPACT OF LAND REDISTRIBUTION WAS MINIMAL ON TIMBER, COFFEE AND FRUIT AGRO-INDUSTRY, A CLAIM CONTESTED BY PRIVATE FARMERS. ALL AGREED THAT THE EFFECT WAS FELT MOST IN SMALL AND MID-SIZED COMMERCIAL FARMS. AFFEFFECTED COMMERCIAL FARMERS TOLD THE AMBASSADOR THEY HAD ALL BEEN AFFECTED IN VARIOUS WAYS. THE FARMER WHO HAD QUICKLY SURRENDERED ONE OF HIS TWO FARMS WITHOUT CONTESTATION FADED BEST, WHILE THE INDIVIDUAL WHO MADE THE MOST NOISE AND WAS CONTESTING IN COURT WAS SUFFERING THE MOST. BUT IN EVERY CASE, PRODUCTIVITY WAS SUFFERING GREATLY WITH CROPS OR DAIRY PRODUCTION ON COMMERCIAL FARMS REDUCED SUBSTANTIALLY AND FARM OCCUPIERS WITH LITTLE KNOW-HOW AND FEW INPUTS, PRODUCING AT MOST A FEW SUBSISTENCE CROPS. IN MANY CASES, THE BENEFICIARIES OF THE A-2 COMMERCIAL FARM DISTRIBUTION PROGRAM HAVE BEEN URBAN DWELLERS PICKING UP A PIECE OF PROPERTY FOR THE WEEKEND WITH LITTLE EXPERIENCE OR PROSPECTS IN SUCCESSFUL FARMING. MUTARE MAYOR MUDEHWE WAS A PLEASANT EXCEPTION TO THE TENDENCY TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE LAND DISTRIBUTION PROGRAM WHILE THE GETTING WAS GOOD. DESPITE THE FACT THAT HIS OWN LAND IN THE COMMUNAL AREAS HAS INSUFFICIENT WATER FOR PRODUCTIVE FARMING, HE DID

NOT APPLY FOR A FARM IN THE A-2 PROGRAM TO AVOID THE APPEARANCE OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST.

13. (C) THE VISIT TO THE DOD-REHABILITATED SCHOOL IN ROWA, JUST 20 MINUTES OUTSIDE MUTARE IN A COMMUNAL AREA, WAS INSTRUCTIVE. THE SCHOoled WAS BASIC BUT SERVICEABLE. THE PRIMARY SCHOOL STUDENTS, PRESENT DURING THE SCHOOL HOLIDAYS PERFORMING THEIR MANDATORY GROUNDS

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MAINTENANCE CHORES, WERE DRESSED POORLY BUT ADEQUATELY AND SHOWED NO SIGNS OF HUNGER OR MALNUTRITION. THE REHABILITATION PROJECT WAS WELL EXECUTED AND A REAL CONTRIBUTION TO THE COMMUNITY, AS DEMONSTRATED BY THE PARTICIPATION OF OFFICIALS FROM THE SCHOOL, THE PROVINCE, THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND THE PARENTS' ASSOCIATION IN THE BRIEF CEREMONY.

VIOLENCE AND POLITICS

14. (C) IN TWO SEPARATE MEETINGS, THE CATHOLIC AND PROTESTANT CLERGYMEN COMPLAINED OF FREQUENT POLITICAL VIOLENCE ORCHESTRATED BY ZANU/PF AND THE GOVERNMENT. THE PROTESTANT CLERGY COMPLAINED THAT THE STATE MEDIA HAD DISTORTED THEIR RECENT MEETING WITH PRESIDENT MUGABE TO CLAIM THAT IT FOCUSED ON THEIR SUPPORT FOR GOVERNMENT LAND REFORM. THEY HAD PUT OUT SUBSEQUENT STATEMENTS CLARIFYING THAT THEIR FOCUS HAD BEEN AN APPEAL FOR NON-VIOLENCE. THEY SAID THAT ALL RELIGIOUS LEADERS IN THE PROVINCE WERE UNITED IN THIS APPEAL. THEY DID NOT BELIEVE THAT GOVERNMENT VIOLENCE WOULD BE EFFECTIVE IN MANICALAND, EXCEPT IN THE MOST RURAL PARTS OF THE

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PROVINCE, WHERE THE OPPOSITION WOULD HAVE DIFFICULTY GETTING ITS MESSAGE OUT. THEY PLANNED TO ORGANIZE MORE PRESSURE AGAINST VIOLENCE IN THE WEEKS AHEAD. CATHOLIC BISHOP MUTUME ALSO EXPRESSED CONCERN AT POLITICAL VIOLENCE IN THE PROVINCE AND THE GOVERNMENT'S UNWILLINGNESS TO CURB IT. HE DID NOT THINK THAT THIS VIOLENCE WOULD BENEFIT THE RULING PARTY, HOWEVER, AS PEOPLE KNEW WHO WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE VIOLENCE AND

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ECONOMIC HARD TIMES. AS THE AMBASSADOR ARRIVED IN MUTARE, HE ENCOUNTERED A GROUP OF 100 GREEN-UNIFORMED YOUTH BRIGADE GRADUATES BEING SWORN IN AND WELCOMED BACK TO MUTARE TO CARRY OUT THEIR SERVICE. ASKED WHAT WORK THEY WOULD BE DOING IN MUTARE, THE ACTING PROVINCIAL ADMINISTRATOR SAID THEY WOULD BE CARRYING OUT CIVIC PROJECTS. (COMMENT: WOULD THAT IT WERE SO.)

15. (C) LAWRENCE MUDEHWE, WHO HAS BEEN ELECTED MAYOR OF MUTARE TWICE, NOTWITHSTANDING THE OPPOSITION OF HIS OWN ZANU-PF PARTY, WAS FRANK ABOUT ZANU-PF WEAKNESS IN MANICALAND. HE NOTED THE POOR REPRESENTATION OF MANICALAND IN THE ZANU-PF LEADERSHIP AND THE TENDENCY OF HARARE PARTY HEADQUARTERS TO SEEK TO IMPOSE ITS DECISIONS ON LOCAL PARTY STRUCTURES. HE BELIEVED THAT POOR ECONOMIC CONDITIONS AND COUNTER-PRODUCTIVE ECONOMIC POLICIES WOULD HAVE A NEGATIVE EFFECT AT THE POLLS AND THAT ZANU-PF WOULD NOT DO WELL IN MANICALAND PROVINCE.

HIV-AIDS: A GROWING COMMUNITY FOCUS

16. (U) IN MEETINGS WITH CHURCH BISHOPS, HIV-AIDS WAS A MAJOR CONCERN. THE CATHOLIC BISHOP, WHO HAS HAD SUBSTANTIAL SUPPORT IN HIS OUTREACH PROGRAMS FROM THE CATHOLIC RELIEF SERVICE, SAID THAT HE NO LONGER NEEDED TO PLEA FOR SUPPORT FROM COMMUNITY LEADERS. EVERYONE HAS BEEN TOUCHED BY THE DISEASE, EVEN IN THE MOST RURAL PARTS OF HIS DIOCESE. VILLAGE CHIEFS WERE ANXIOUS TO HELP AND TO HAVE THE CHURCH'S ASSISTANCE IN CONFRONTING THE PROBLEM. BISHOP MUTUME SAID THAT THE CHURCH HAS
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SOUGHT TO ASSIST IN THE FAMILY CARE OF THOSE AFFECTED, BUT THEN TO HELP TRANSPORT THE ILL TO THEIR RURAL VILLAGES BEFORE DEATH IN ORDER TO SPARE THE FAMILY EXPENSIVE FUNERAL COSTS. BISHOP MUTUME AND THE OTHER BISHOPS WERE ALL FOCUSED ON BEHAVIOR CHANGE AS A KEY TO ATTACKING HIV-AIDS. THEY WERE PLEASED TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE NEW START VOLUNTARY COUNSELING AND TESTING CENTER WHICH IS FUNCTIONING IN MUTARE IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE MUTARE HEALTH DEPARTMENT AND THE RED CROSS. THE AMBASSADOR VISITED THE MUTARE NEW START CENTER, WHICH HAS SEEN IMPRESSIVE GROWTH IN ITS USAGE, PARTICULARLY SINCE THE INTRODUCTION OF QUICK TESTING KITS.

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